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Book Review: Stargazer: The Life and Times of the Telescope

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Stargazer : the life and times of the telescope



Watson, Fred. Da Capo, 2004

342p, 0306814323 \$24.95

LC Call Number: [QB85](#)

The telescope is one of the most significant inventions in history. From this premise, Watson (Anglo-Australian Observatory) spins a tale that will delight history of science buffs and engage even casual readers. "Aperture fever" drives the quest for bigger telescopes, says Watson, and his story backs that up with an impressive mélange of personal accounts from his own career as professional astronomer and from solid historical references. Along the way he also dispels some common misconceptions about telescopes; e.g., Galileo did not invent the telescope (but it was on Leonardo da Vinci's "to do" list); it was originally a military secret; astronomers rarely look through eyepieces. Watson has done his homework; his book is chock-full of historical tidbits that fill in the historical gaps in most books' discourses on telescopes. Moreover, he provides personal accounts of the people (and egos) who built them. The icing on the cake is the last chapter, a clever "epilogue" from the year 2108--Watson's prognostication that instrumentation, not aperture size, will be more important as humans strive to build the ultimate telescope. "Notes and Sources" is a valuable resource in its own right. A fine piece of science writing this is!

Summing Up: Essential. All levels.

Reviewer: [T. D. Oswalt](#), Florida Institute of Technology

Recommendation: Essential

Readership Level: All Readership Levels, General Readers, Lower-division Undergraduates, Upper-division Undergraduates, Graduate Students, Researchers/Faculty, Two-Year Technical Program Students, Professionals/Practitioners

Interdisciplinary Subjects:

Subject: [Science & Technology - Astronautics & Astronomy](#)

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